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## Director's Corner



Alexander Newton, Mali Mission Director

Having now been in Mali and traveled the entire country including Kidal, I am most uplifted by the great number of Malians who are truly passionate about developing their communities. In particular, I am finding that the large number of women's groups that now exist all over the country are a huge resource deserving support in every way possible as women are the group most influential to children's education and health. For example, in Bourem, in the region of Gao and one of the poorest cities in the country, a women's group has planted thousands of trees to help restrain the invasion of the desert sands, and no one is more proud than the husbands of these women, who

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## US Ambassador Celebrates Excellence in Health Care Delivery

*"One finger alone cannot lift a stone"*

Photo: Sana



**RELIEVED MOTHER** — Nakani Camara and her baby, beneficiaries of the award-winning Dangassa CSCOM.

**DANGASSA, Mali** — It was jubilation all over Dangassa, a village about 80 km south of Bamako, on February 16, 2006. The coveted Ciwara d'Or Award was conferred on the Community Health Center (CSCOM) of the village and the management staff, an unprecedented event in Mali. The "Ciwara" is an iconic Malian symbol representing excellence, and "d'Or" is its gold standard. The accreditation ceremony, presided over by the Minister of Health and the US Ambassador, attracted an impressive crowd from all neighboring villages and communities covered by the CSCOM.

The *Ciwara d'Or* Initiative, developed by USAID Mali's funded *Keneya Ciwara* Project through CARE International since October 2003, is an interactive process involving local authorities, health centers and

communities, which aims to improve the quality of basic health services. The Initiative covers 236 CSCOMs in 11 districts nationwide and two communes in the district of Bamako.

The *Ciwara d'Or* is awarded based on a set of criteria developed by community representatives and service providers. The criteria sets strict standards for services offered by the health center; for equipment and materials; and requires the presence of adequately trained health personnel. It also requires the active participation of health center management committee. Prior to awarding the *Ciwara d'Or*, a quality assessment committee organizes a competition between Community Health Centers to motivate them to improve the quality of their services. The *Ciwara*

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## Conflict Management Through Radio; Peace building Through Communication

*"Radio brings rival communities to together"*

**ALMOUSTARAT, North Mali** — Mali is threatened by regional and tribal conflict, religious extremist groups with possible ties to terrorist organizations, and a large cohort of disaffected youth and ex-combatants emanating from the Northern Peace



**ALMOUSTARAT** — Children sharing their excitement at the radio station .

Accord of 1996. The nomadic populations of the North remain largely isolated and are often marginalized from participation in decisions that affect their lives. In light of these threats, USAID is establishing and maintaining contact while providing services for the nomadic population. Radio has proven to be the most cost-effective means of delivering vital information on health, nutrition, education, and peace and democracy. Specifically, under the Conflict Management through Community Radio Program, USAID's Bureau for Africa and Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (DCHA/CMM) are establishing ten FM radio stations that will reach an estimated 385,000 people in Mali's north.

Although the program is only now completing its first year, simply the promise of radio has already helped to develop bonds between two communities characterized by long

standing conflict. USAID assessed the Town of Tarinkit, with a predominately Touareg population, and the Town of Almustarat, predominately Arab, as sites for a radio station. Almustarat was ultimately seen as the most viable site. This caused immediate dismay from 23 leaders of the Touareg "fractions" and debate with the leaders of Almustarat. USAID made it clear that the two communities had to come to an agreement or the station would be installed in another town. Everyone wanted the radio. First the Touaregs met and then the Touaregs and Arabs decided to meet to discuss the issue. Citizens and local authorities came to an agreement on the site - Almustarat. Members of these two communities were astonished at what they had been able to achieve. It was the first time inhabitants of the district had collaborated on anything! They made decisions that ensured that both communities would benefit from the presence of the radio; they worked together to build the station; they selected radio staff and a steering committee where both communities were fairly represented. The radio station became operational in April, 2005, but even prior to broadcasting, the activity and its preparation has had a profound impact on conflict management in the area.

Sidalamine Ag Doho, Vice President of the District Council, declared: "We are very grateful to the Prefect and his delegation for their mediation efforts in what would have been a useless misunderstanding ....over the radio issue. We now feel happy to have been educated on this problem. Our Council was elected based on consensus. Therefore, we wish all actions to be initiated are based on consensus." — **Dennis Bilodeau.**

*(Continued from page 1)* — **Director's Corner**

are most ready to "show off" this wonderful project. Certainly, growing trees in the desert environment is no easy feat. In many other villages, women's groups, assisted by USAID/Mali, are working with revolving credit funds with 100% repayment rates, enabling these women to pay for their kids schooling, buy critically needed medicines and start their own micro enterprises. This is money that winds up directly supporting the things that Mali needs most : access to education and better health, both critical strategic objectives of the Mali USAID Mission.

I am also struck by the enormous potential offered by the Millennium Challenge Account project proposal being developed in Mali and by the sugarcane project proposal of Schaffer Global Group, an American company, and Illovo Ltd., a South African company, developing sugarcane production overseas. The latter is a Global Development Alliance being supported by USAID which is funding most of the research costs of this promising venture. Both of these mega projects, one primarily in rice and the other in sugar, now seem likely to go forward and will both be in the *Office du Niger* region (the largest irrigated perimeter in the Sahel), with the potential to increase irrigated hectareage therein by a whopping 40%! These two projects developing almost side-by-

side offer an enormous opportunity for USAID to help spread effects thereof, so that a large number of people benefit therefrom including people involved in micro-enterprises which can help service the people in these two areas.

Finally, literacy rates in Mali continue to be among the lowest in the world, and our education program is working to improve the quality of the schools so that children attending will actually learn to read (not always the case). We are also putting major emphasis on attracting larger numbers of girls to schools through various means including the Ambassador's Scholarship Program which last year helped over 5,000 girls in the northern regions to attend primary schools. It was uplifting to find that the "pass" rate for girls at the end of primary school was up over 25% this past year. In the future, we will be looking for ways to include adult literacy in all of our programs, because when people become literate, especially women, they are in a better position to enter the economy and earn money. They also appreciate education more than ever and the result is that both boys and girls are more likely to attend school — one of our main objectives. — **Alex.**



## A Partnership of Enlightenment: Community Outreach with USAID Support

*“USAID made a Malian NGO an international model of women’s leadership”*

Photo: USAID



**HAPPY AND CONFIDENT FOR THE FUTURE** — Mrs. Traoré in the Bamako office of her NGO.

**BAMAKO, Mali** — When midwife Traoré Fatoumata Touré was invited to participate in the Women in Management (WIM) Program in 1982, she could not have imagined what a significant impact she would soon have on the lives of her fellow Malians. Traoré was not only chosen for the selective conference of women leaders, she also drafted the winning project proposal for the improvement of women’s health in Mali. Traoré would go on to found an exemplary non-governmental organization, *“L’Association de Soutien au Développement des Activités de Population”* (ASDAP). With generous and extensive support from USAID, ASDAP has grown into a nationwide organization, spreading vital reproductive and child health services in Mali.

As a midwife in rural Mali, Traoré was constantly reminded of how women’s lives were jeopardized and often cut short because of inadequate health care services. Because access to modern health care services was nearly impossible in most of Mali, people were ignorant about family planning, birth spacing, and the prevention and treatment of life-threatening illnesses such as malaria and diarrhea. With USAID’s funding, Madame Traoré started her

pilot project in 1983. Its main goal was to disseminate information concerning family planning, pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and hygiene.

Often, Traoré encountered skepticism and opposition to her program; however, she says it was essential to persist. “Their resistance is linked to their ignorance,” Traoré says. “If they’re not interested, you have to persevere.” She smiles as she recounts a particular anecdote concerning the safe spacing of pregnancies. “I asked about the millet they were growing in their fields to draw a comparison they would understand.” The villagers explained that, to get a better crop, it is necessary to space millet stalks, making sure they grow at a certain distance from one another. In doing so, one can ensure better, fuller grains. They hit the nail on the head: Traoré explained that just as millet stalks needed a certain space to grow full and healthy so did mother and child. Thus, she convinced the village women that to improve child survival, ease pregnancy and childbirth, and ensure that their babies be fed and clothed, it was essential that pregnancies also be spaced.

Based in Bamako, ASDAP has large

centers around the country, notably in Segou, Katibougou, and Mopti. To promote healthy behaviors, ASDAP focuses on interpersonal communication through “peer educators” and community health workers. In larger towns, peer educators are typically students, young leaders in their schools and communities. In rural areas, the villagers and their chief choose a trusted young man and woman to take the role. ASDAP also recruits well-regarded individuals in “high risk” groups, including truck drivers, street vendors, and prostitutes. Today, almost 2,000 peer educators have graduated from the ASDAP training program. Last year, 46,842 adolescents in the regions of Bamako, Koutiala, and Segou made use of ASDAP programs and more than 23,000 condoms and 1,200 packs of oral contraceptives were distributed.

At the Bamako center, teens find a welcoming environment that ensures confidentiality, but also allows peer interaction. There is a gym room, basketball and volleyball court, TV, and a cyber café. Workshops and classes on typing, karate, gymnastics, and other sports are offered to the public.

Sixteen-year-old Kabangou Touré says that he comes to the center to play sports, meet people, and use the internet. “I come here often; I can contact friends over the internet and read about sports.” He also visits the medical facilities adjacent to the cyber café and the gym. This set-up, according to Mrs. Traoré, puts teens at ease. “They can come play a game of basketball with their friends and consult a doctor, but no one needs to know what they’re here for,” she says.

The community center in Segou is also rapidly growing, particularly following the inauguration of the Community Learning and Information Center (CLIC) funded by USAID as part of a special initiative to widen access to the internet. The community center now offers internet portals, a photocopy and fax machine, as well as health information, psychological and family planning counseling.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## One Potato, Two Potatoes, and More...

*Cooperative restructuring holds promise for future success in the potato sector*



Photo: USAID

**Sikasso** — Sorting out and packing potatoes

**SIKASSO, Mali** — Mali's Sikasso region has long produced potatoes for export, with totals in recent years reaching several thousand MT; but the potato sector's best days are yet to come. West African countries import tens of thousands of Dutch-grown potatoes annually despite the naturally high quality of the Malian potato. Until now, the country has yet to exploit the significant opportunities the sub-region offers.

ing the 11 principal trading villages into four cooperatives, totaling nearly 175 members. The cooperative structure gives members unprecedented access to finance, leverage to advocate policy reform, and ability to maximize efficiency by sharing transport costs. Transactions can now be more systematized and profitable, increasing the likelihood of repeat buyers in future years and increasing reinvestment rates.

The sector's diffused structure means that transactions have typically been ad hoc, often inefficient, and seldom guaranteed.

TradeMali is changing this. In advance of the 2005 potato harvest, TradeMali teamed with producers and exporters in the Sikasso region — the center of Mali's potato industry — organiz-

Importantly, the structure is replicable, which will enable future potato exporters to initiate their own cooperatives.

The structure also facilitates capacity building. TradeMali is providing training on quality management, handling, and planning. PRODEPAM and Mali Finance, TradeMali's partners in USAID-Mali's economic growth portfolio, have begun to target the cooperatives for agricultural production and finance interventions. — **Harvey Schartup**.

(Continued from page 3) — **ASDAP**

The collaboration with ASDAP is USAID's single longest partnership with a local health NGO in Mali. USAID has been ASDAP's primary sponsor since 1994, the financial support totaling nearly \$3.7 million. This funding has allowed ASDAP to provide services, while simultaneously building their capacity. Traoré enthusiastically speaks of the support USAID has given her NGO over the last ten years. "USAID made a

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(Continued from page 1) — **US Ambassador celebrates Excellence....**  
*d'Or* quality label is awarded jointly by the health district



Photo: Sana

**PARTNERS IN HEALTH** — Mali Minister of Health Maïga, US Ambassador, Terrence P. McCulley, and CSCOM President Kankou Camara (blue) at the unveiling of the Award.

quality assessment team, local administrative and political authorities and the National Directorate of Health, and is given to the CSCOM which has the highest scores for quality health care service delivery.

The accreditation ceremony, presided over by Mme Maïga Zeinab Mint Youba, Minister of Health, was graced by the presence of the US Ambassador to Mali, Terrence P. McCulley, the USAID Mali Mission Director, Alex Newton.

Kankou Moussa Camara, the President of the CSCOM of Dangassa, said "We feel highly honored that our CSCOM is being awarded the highest award of the competition. Local communities and villagers will do everything they can to ensure the sustainability of this facility."

The US Ambassador told the residents of Dangassa and surrounding communities that they should be proud of their CSCOM for its having been awarded the *Ciwara d'Or*, and assured them that USAID and the American People will continue to support Mali and its people in their development efforts. He encouraged them to continue to work together, and quoted the Malian proverb "one finger alone cannot lift a stone".

A skit performed by Dangassa youth highlighted the importance of quality health services and best practices, including birth spacing, and hygiene. Following the youth's performance, the Minister of Health addressed the assembled crowd: "the accreditation ceremony in Dangassa complements Mali's Ten-Year Health and Social Development Program, especially regarding the scaling up and improvement of the quality of health services."

The highlight of the event was the presentation of the *Ciwara d'Or* Award to the President of the CSCOM of Dangassa by the Minister. The ceremony was completed by a visit to the CSCOM that received the *Ciwara d'Or* Accreditation.

— **Moussa Doumbia**



## USAID-Funded Teacher Training Via Radio Program Launched in Mali

*“Building the capacities of teachers and supervisors to improve the educational system”*

Photo: USAID



**STAY TUNNED** — Mali's Minister of Education, Prof. Mohamed L. Traore, and Sara-Rasmussen Tall (USAID/Mali Education Team, holding a freeplay radio, with two FIER program officials standing by their sides.

**BAMAKO, Mali** — The program FIER (*Formation Interactive des Enseignants par la Radio*) was officially launched in September 2005. FIER, which is a program of the Ministry of Education in Mali, is funded by the United State Agency for International Development (USAID). The implementing partners are Education Development Center (EDC) and the Academy for Educational Development (AED).

FIER has two main objectives: developing and broadcasting radio programs for teacher training, and assisting the staff of 6 pre-service training institutes (IFMs) to install and use technology-based learning centers in their institutions. FIER's radio programs were launched on Malian airwaves in October, 2005. Meanwhile, two of the six institutes have received the computers, scanners, and other technology tools for their learning centers, and will be beginning the training course in the integration of this technology into their instructional cycle this fall.

The launching ceremony was distinguished by the presence of the Minister of Education, Professor Mamdou Lamine Traoré. The Director of USAID Mali, Alexander Newton, the National Director

of Basic Education, Souleymane Koné, and the Director of the National Center for Education, Mr. Nampaga Otian Koné, also were present. High cadres of the Ministry both at the central and decentralized levels and representatives from various organizations working in the field of education in Mali attended as well.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Mr. Alexander Newton, gave a speech that highlighted the correspondence of USAID's Basic Education Strategic Objective and the current reforms in Malian education with FIER's ground-breaking work in the use of technology to train teachers. USAID supports in-service teacher training in Mali through FIER. USAID Director expressed his certainty that the radio programs that FIER will broadcast “will contribute in the reinforcement of the capacities of the teachers and their supervisors and in the improvement of the Malian educational system”.

The National Director of Basic Education, Mr. Souleymane Koné, afterwards gave a welcoming speech. He listed the characteristics of the FIER program and wished all the success in its implementa-

tion. Following that, FIER presented more details about the program through a slideshow presentation.

The discourse of the Minister, which came at the end of the official launching day, demonstrated the interest of the MoE in general and the Minister himself in particular in this program. The Minister, Professor Mamadou Lamine Traore, declared that “the use of the radio in teacher training in Mali is extremely important as it reduces the distances” which confront the ministry in executing traditional face-to-face training. The minister mentioned as well that the recording studio for the program, the building for which is to be constructed by the Ministry, will “soon be established.” The Minister also emphasized the need to improve education in the north (girls education in particular) especially in Kidal; this is a goal that FIER will strive to reach even more successfully.

At the end of the ceremony, USAID and FIER representatives presented a Free-play radio to the Minister. This kind of radio, which the program is going to distribute to schools and pedagogy support centers (CAPs), is unique in that it does not need electricity or batteries to function. FIER expects to work through its partnerships to distribute thousands of this type of radio in the country before the program ends.

The official launching of the program FIER was a satisfying day for the small FIER team that has spent a year preparing to introduce its products to the teachers and supervisors of Mali. It also, by all accounts, was an informative day for those who attended. USAID and the staff of FIER look forward to continuing to work with all who came to ensure that FIER's technology-based trainings meet the needs of Mali's vast and far-flung teacher population. — **EDC&USAID.**

(Continued from page 4) — **ASDAP**

Malian NGO an international model of women's leadership...they gave us the confidence and the means to get to where we are today. We will never forget the help USAID has given and continues to give ASDAP,” Traoré says. — **Nellie Vishnevsky.**

## Making Connections: USAID Brings Wireless Internet Connectivity to Katibougou

*“Investing in IPR/IFRA is investing not only in education, but above all in agriculture”*

Photo: Dennis



**CONNECTED** — Mali's Education Minister (center), USAID Director (to his left), and Prof. J. Staatz (right) from MSU watching a connection demonstration with students from IPR as witnesses.

**KATIBOUGOU, Mali** — The information superhighway is the direct path to Mali's economic development, and a partnership between USAID and Michigan State University (MSU) has just mowed over a major speed bump.

USAID/Mali has helped bring high-speed Internet access to Mali's only university-level school of agriculture and natural resources, located in Katibougou, a small village 40 miles from Mali's capital city of Bamako. There, stakes in agricultural science and research are high in a low-income, developing country in which more than 70 percent of the people live in rural areas.

Mali's leaders have identified modernizing agriculture and strengthening food security as crucial to the country's future — but faculty and students at the school, IPR/IFRA — *Institut Polytechnique Rural et de Recherche Appliquée* in Katibougou — had to drive an hour to get access to e-mail. Scientific data access was relegated to a few shaky dial-up modems. In effect, Mali's most crucial cutting-edge research needs were locked in a time warp.

Over the past 4 years, MSU faculty, with support from the USAID-funded Higher Education for Development office (former Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation), the USAID/MSU Food Security Cooperative Agreement, and USDA, have been working to strengthen teaching and research programs at the Malian school. In 2005, Professor John Staatz of MSU met with USAID/Mali's Accelerated Economic Growth team to discuss how the lack of reliable Internet connectivity was stifling both research and teaching at IPR/IFRA. Because the agriculture school was located so far outside of Bamako, it was impossible to connect it with the wireless Internet system that USAID/Mali had financed for the rest of the University of Bamako. The mission identified VSAT (satellite) as the appropriate technology, and MSU, through its various USAID-supported projects, promised to provide important Internet-based content on food and agriculture to IPR/IFRA once the Internet connection was complete.

“Agricultural science is the number one priority for Mali, yet their agriculture school was cut off from scientific communication,” Staatz said. “It made no sense. The idea of the VSAT connection was an easy sell to USAID,” Staatz continued. “We could all see the potential for a lot of collaboration, and USAID/Mali was quick to respond.” USAID/Mali Director Alex Newton noted, “For USAID, the American government and American people, investing in IPR/IFRA is not only investing in education. Above all, it is investing in agriculture, which is not only the top priority of Mali, but also a pillar of the strategic objectives of USAID.”

On December 15, some 700 people packed an amphitheatre in Katibougou to see high-speed internet pour onto the campus. Nearly all faculty and students of IPR/IFRA were there, many wearing custom T-shirts commemorating the event. Mali's Minister of Education was on the stage, along with the governor, USAID/Mali officials, and local dignitaries. The minister clicked a mouse and was connected, via video conference projected on the amphitheater's screen, to MSU Agricultural Economics Professor Eric Crawford and Ph.D. student Goita Marthe Diallo, who were in Agriculture Hall in East Lansing, Michigan, 5,000 miles away.

The maiden voyage of the computer hook-up had an especially personal touch. Diallo was the top graduate from IPR/IFRA in 1998. Now she was back on the Mali campus again, bigger than life courtesy of the new video conferencing technology. When she began to speak, the room in Katibougou burst into applause.

USAID and the Malian Government have purchased over 60 new computers to help faculty and students take advantage of the new connectivity. MSU put together training sessions and free access to online resources and arranged Skype software to provide free Internet telephone and video-conferencing.

Already, the collaborations are heating up. Mel Yokoyama, professor of animal science at MSU, is using Skype to communicate with his IPR/IFRA research partner, Boubacar Demele, who just spent three months working in Yokoyama's lab in East Lansing and who has now returned to Mali. Mathieu Ngouajio, an MSU assistant professor of horticulture, already has brought in wireless routers to IPR/IFRA, which will facilitate the school becoming a center for short-courses, including using material online from MSU. Stephen Esquith, professor and chair of philosophy at MSU, is using MSU's web-based ANGEL system to conduct an ethics course and discussion groups at the Mali ag school while working there on a Fulbright scholarship.

“This school was regarded as somewhat backwards because of the lack of Internet access,” Staatz said. “Now it will become a lot more attractive. There's a lot to grow here.” And both the faculty members, students, and local populations have pledged to make the best use of this long-awaited connectivity and the equipment that made it possible — **S. Nichols.**



## Keneya Ciwara Strives For Excellence in Health

*“With an Eye on the Future, Keneya Ciwara will certainly achieve excellence in health”*



*Community Liaison provides health information and education to a group of women*

**BAMAKO, Mali** — In the courtyard, newborn babies decry their arrival; young women laugh, sitting on benches waiting for a consultation; and doctors in white coats go from building to building.

Step inside one of the buildings, and you may find Haoua Diarra counseling a woman about contraceptives, family planning, or pregnancy. Diarra, a midwife, has recently graduated from the new *Keneya Ciwara* family planning and reproductive health training program, a two-week intensive course on modern contraceptive methods and patient counseling. This is the scene at one of several medical Reference Centers (CSREF) located near Bamako. The facility houses a hospital, maternity ward, laboratory, and dentist, among other services.

Implemented by CARE and its partners, the *Keneya Ciwara* project strives for excellence in health (the Bambara mythical creature, Ciwara, representing “excellence in work” inspires the name). The goal of the project is “to reduce mortality rates among Malian women and children”. Thus, *Ciwara* aims to improve access, availability, and use of quality medical services. When the project began in September 2003, the plan was to train professional health

workers (doctors, nurses, midwives) on up to date medical practices and interpersonal communication skills. These health workers would then coach community based agents (CBAs) and provide health care to people in their communities. Today, 46 midwives and 1,500 CBAs have completed the program; the goal is to have 3,000 CBAs working in the field by the end of this year. “We are growing at a very high rate,” says Dr. Sangare Madina Ba, the reproductive health specialist. Already, in the first few weeks of 2005, fifty midwives begun their training with new books and materials bought by funds from USAID.

Training consists of two parts: theory and practice. Healthcare workers are instructed on how to make their patients feel at ease and establish a trusting “provider-client” relationship. In addition, they are introduced to the latest methods of family planning and health research findings. Previous to the *Ciwara* training, Diarra had not been instructed in family planning since 1984. However, thanks to *Ciwara*, the services she provides have greatly improved and the number of clients increases daily. “If a patient is satisfied, she will refer her friends,” Diarra comments. The government has funded a private consulting

room in Diarra’s clinic, serving as testimony to the health center’s rising success.

Dr. David Awasum, Head of Communications, says that although the *Keneya Ciwara* program is still young, its achievements are already measurable. Behavior change among the population has “greatly increased as shown by the [growing] demand for services”, Awasum says. More than 10,000 women of reproductive age are now using modern family planning methods. Fifty-six percent of infants in the areas covered by *Keneya Ciwara* program received DPT vaccinations before their first birthday and thousands of pregnant women and children are now sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

One of the most effective and long-lasting methods of family planning the center offers is the IUD, or Intra-Uterine Device. An assessment done in 2004, just before the training program began, found that clinics had only one or two insertion kits, making it almost impossible to administer more than two a day. USAID purchased additional kits for each clinic, and as a result, each clinic can now serve many more clients on a daily basis.

Creating communication tools that cater to all nine of Mali’s official languages and regional dialects is a challenge, as is finding enough CBAs to cover the vast country. Maintaining sufficient supplies of vitamins, vaccines, and contraceptives can also be a problem.

This coming year, the *Keneya Ciwara* project aims to ameliorate the services it provides. Among the goals is training at least 1,500 new CBAs and widening the geographical reach of the program. *Ciwara* plans to increase their influence at the community level by widespread distribution of educational material. Also targeted are monthly monitoring of centers around the country and monthly committee meetings. With an eye on the future, *Keneya Ciwara* will certainly achieve excellence in health. — *Nelly Vishnevsky.*

## Village Technologies Change Women's Lives in Mali

*“With simple equipment, we save tremendous time and energy and increase production”*

Photo: K. Dienta



**JUBIATION** — Members of the “Parissée” carrying away their new tools.

**MARKALA, Mali** — In Mali, rural production is mainly controlled by men and is still based on traditional practices. Traditional gardening is widespread in rural areas and is a good source for household food provision and income generation. In Markala, a small Bambara town located 30 km South East of Ségou, like in many other rural communes, traditional gardens are one component of traditional food production systems, and share many basic characteristics with small-scale traditional agriculture. Cash incomes of many women in this town are so minimal that even small amounts of savings earned from the sale of garden products most of the time contributes tremendously to improving household welfare. However, very few farmers in Markala,

particularly women, enjoy the use of modern technologies to produce necessary goods. They still continue to produce goods by using rudimentary equipment that are time consuming and have poor economic returns. Many rural women remain unskilled farmers because of their limited access to production tools and equipment. Despite all the difficulties women face, they are responsible for storage, processing, and marketing of their garden products. During the cold season, they grow an abundance of vegetables but most of their products get spoiled because of poor conservation and processing practices.

In 2004, USAID Mali, through a small grant mechanism (\$50,000) helped to

improve and increase production of gardening products for women's groups in the areas by introducing new technologies into their production system. A total of 13 women's groups received various tools and equipments such as solar dryers, buckets, oxen, donkeys and donkey carts, seeds, and plough. In addition to technical assistance provided to women, the locally made technological devices that the groups received have helped them double their productivity. Today, with these devices women can save time and reduce their daily workload; improve household nutrition by increasing and diversifying their diet, and many of them have significantly increased their incomes. Access to appropriate technologies is key factor for increasing rural production. To quote Mme Marie Salomé, the president of “Parissée”, a rural women's group in Markala, “with simple equipment we save tremendous time and energy; and increase both our production and income. We could now participate more in our commune's development activities.” “With more resources,” she continued, “we will contribute to the construction of a daycare center in our commune so women will have more time to devote to the management of the commune.” This highlights the importance of appropriate technologies on rural women's lives.

For many poor women, access to technology has upgraded their knowledge and made their life much easier by increasing their productivity and adding value to outputs. In the context of Mali, the advantage of developing and promoting rural technologies is that many of the small tools and equipment can be made locally by rural artisans, an opportunity promoting rural employment — **Kadidia Dienta, USAID.**



***“Reducing poverty and accelerating economic growth through partnerships.”***

**Alexander Newton**, Mission Director  
**Latanya Mapp**, S/Program Officer  
**Penelope Meyers**, S/Executive Officer  
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